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## CHAPTER 8

### *Fraternal Conflict in Hesiod's Works and Days*

*Lilah Grace Canevaro*

νῦν γὰρ δὴ γένος ἐστὶ σιδήρεον· οὐδέ ποτ' ἦμαρ  
παύσονται καμάτου καὶ διζύου οὐδέ τι νύκτωρ  
τειρόμενοι· χαλεπὰς δὲ θεοὶ δώσουσι μερίμνας.

Now is the race of iron. On no day will they  
cease from toil and misery, and on no night,  
being worn down. The gods will give them harsh cares.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 176–8<sup>1</sup>

Hesiod's *Works and Days* is explicitly and emphatically a poem of the Iron Age, a time of hard work. This means first of all agricultural work, something which did not trouble the Golden Race for whom 'the grain-giving earth produced fruit of its own accord, abundant and unbegrudged' (117–18: καρπὸν δ' ἔφερε ζείδωρος ἄρουρα | αὐτομάτῃ πολλὸν τε καὶ ἄφθονον). But work in the fields is not the only trial set up for the Race of Iron:

οὐδὲ πατὴρ παίδεσσιν ὁμοίος οὐδέ τι παῖδες,  
οὐδὲ ξείνος ξεινοδόκῳ καὶ ἐταῖρος ἐταίρῳ,  
οὐδὲ κασίγνητος φίλος ἔσσεται, ὥς τὸ πάρος περ.

Father will not be like-minded with children nor children with father,  
nor guest with host nor companion with companion,  
nor will a brother be dear, as before.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 182–4

Hesiod predicts conflict. Children will be at odds with parents, guests with hosts, and brothers with brothers. In this latter case at least, Hesiod is already a test case. Hesiod designates conflict – both in this poem and

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this chapter, the Hesiod text I give is that of West 1966 and West 1978; *Iliad* and *Odyssey* text is taken from the OCT, *Homeri Opera*, ed. T. W. Allen and D. B. Monro, 5 vols. All translations of Greek texts are my own unless stated otherwise. Translations of Near Eastern texts come from Pritchard 2011.

in his *Theogony* – as conflict within the family, and with immediate family associates. Something has to be done, so Hesiod sets out to teach his Iron Age audience how to manage the Iron Age condition. In keeping with the hurdles to be overcome, he establishes a didactic framework itself rooted in a conflict, and one very close to home – the quarrel between himself and his own brother Perses. In this chapter I argue that Hesiod diverges from traditional models in choosing a brother as his didactic addressee, and that he does so in view of what he wants to teach, and how he wants to teach it.

### The Kings

Against a backdrop of quarrelling and judicial procedure, Hesiod addresses two different interlocutors: his brother, and the corrupt kings on whom his brother relies. Immediate insight into Hesiod's stance is provided by the fable of the hawk and the nightingale, told at *Works and Days* 202–12. It begins:

νῦν δ' αἶνον βασιλεῦς' ἐρέω ...

Now I shall tell a fable to the kings ...

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 202

An address to rulers is a common topos in Near Eastern wisdom literature, for example in the Akkadian *Advice to a Prince* or the Egyptian *Instruction for Merikare*. That Hesiod's *Works and Days* is part of this widespread and long-standing genre of wisdom literature has been established by Walcot, West, Schmitz, and Rutherford, among others.<sup>2</sup> Features of the poem such as an immanent narrator, a prevalence of precepts and admonitions, and an explicit addressee mark out a pattern (or, as Fowler puts it, a 'mode')<sup>3</sup> different from that of other hexameter poems. Furthermore, within the didactic genre the *choice* of explicit addressees carves out Hesiod's particular didactic project. The fable, then, begins with a warning to kings – and this finds straightforward parallels in Near Eastern and Egyptian literature.

<sup>2</sup> Walcot 1962 and 1966, West 1978: 3–25, Schmitz 2004, Rutherford 2009. On the *Works and Days* and its Near Eastern connections see also Woodward 2007: 108–18. I present my own arguments for the *Works and Days* as a wisdom text in Canevaro 2014. It is argued against by, for example, Beall 2004: 5. On the issue of genre and the *Works and Days* more generally, see Sider 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Fowler 2003.

Hesiod's address to the kings may, in part, be an alignment with the wisdom tradition; however, it is also a subversion of it. Both the *Advice to a Prince* and the *Instruction for Merikare* constitute handbooks on how to be a good king, the latter addressed by the current king to his son, who will become king after him. They prize kingship, and offer advice and warnings for the future. Hesiod's attitude to the kings in the *Works and Days*, by contrast, is loaded with recrimination. Whilst the kings dispensed straight judgements in the *Theogony*, in the *Works and Days* they are corrupt (219, 250, 264): 'gift-guzzling kings' (38–9: βασιλῆας δωροφάγους). A corpus-wide approach to the Hesiodic poems reveals just how far they have fallen.<sup>4</sup> Hesiod criticises the kings, but does not advocate conflict with the *basileis*. Rather, he decides to bypass them:

35                   ... ἀλλ' αὖθι διακρινώμεθα νεῖκος  
                  ἰθείησι δίκῃς, αἳ τ' ἐκ Διός εἰσιν ἄρισται.

35                   ... but let us be reconciled in our quarrel here and now  
                  with straight judgements, which are the best from Zeus.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 35–6

Hesiod attempts a reconciliation with his brother, taking matters into his own hands. He is dealing with a family issue, a conflict for which Hesiod himself will act as arbiter. The Egyptian *Instruction of Amen-em-Opet* chapter 9 advises:

Preserve thy tongue from answering thy superior,  
And guard thyself against reviling him.  
Do not make him cast his speech to lasso thee,  
Nor make too free with thy answer.  
Thou shouldst discuss an answer only with a man of thy own size.

Crucially, Hesiod does not concede the kings' superiority. In his apostrophes to the kings at 248 and 263, he uses imperatives, just as when he addresses Perses at 213 and 274: this puts the kings on the same level as Perses, and sets Hesiod above both parties. The phrase ὦ βασιλῆς at 248 is important, because ὦ is not used when an inferior addresses his superior.<sup>5</sup> Hesiod does not subordinate himself to the kings, and even calls them νῆπιοι (40). He is 'free with his answers' to the kings – and goes on to create a brother-to-brother form of advice.

<sup>4</sup> For such a corpus-wide approach see e.g. Clay 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Chantraine 1953–8, 2: 37.

### The Brother

At the end of the fable, Hesiod abandons the kings for good, and turns to a different addressee, who remains an active force in the poem:<sup>6</sup>

ὦ Πέρση, σὺ δ' ἄκουε Δίκης, μηδ' ὕβριν ὀφείλλε·

Perses, you listen to Justice, and do not help *hybris*.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 213

This address to a brother is, as far as I know, unparalleled in ancient wisdom literature. Rather, the normal model – within a familial context – would be for a father to address his son. Most of the extant Egyptian examples follow this pattern, as well as the Sumerian *Instruction of Suruppak* and *The Father and his Misguided Son*, and the Akkadian *Counsels of Wisdom*. That Hesiod chooses to diverge from normal models has often been noted, but the reason for his choice has not yet been adequately explained. Up until the late twentieth century, much scholarship on the question of Perses revolved around whether or not he was real: the real brother of a real Hesiod, with a real chip on his shoulder. Scholars such as Nicolai and Walcott used Hesiod's divergence from traditional models as evidence for Perses' existence.<sup>7</sup> Such autobiographical readings spiralled into a preoccupation with reconstructing the supposed trial setting of the poem.<sup>8</sup> In the past few decades, however, scholarly engagement with the character has shifted towards seeing him as a literary and didactic tool, regardless of truth or fiction, and this makes sense.<sup>9</sup> The fallacy of biographical reconstruction is clear: even when poets choose to include factually accurate autobiography in their work they do so because it makes poetic sense, so the presumed existence of Perses can never fully explain his inclusion in the *Works and Days*.<sup>10</sup> An appeal to (supposed) biographical reality cannot, in other words, provide a substitute for convincing literary interpretation.

<sup>6</sup> Though Perses is conspicuous by his absence for a large chunk of the poem (he is not addressed between lines 397 and 611), he is addressed at the outset of the Calendar and thus his involvement in it is implied.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolai 1964: 193–4, Walcott 1966: 105.

<sup>8</sup> E.g. Latimer 1930, Forbes 1950. On Hesiodic autobiography see also Griffith 1983.

<sup>9</sup> The possibility that Perses might be understood as a fictional persona is raised already in the ancient scholia: see Stamatopoulou 2016: 8–9 for passages. More generally, Stamatopoulou is commenting on the 'marginalization of Perses' in the ancient biographical tradition – a curiosity she attributes both to the excerpting mode of reading the *Works and Days* (on which see Canevaro 2015), and the domination of the *Certamen* tradition (see Bassino in this volume).

<sup>10</sup> On this approach to biographical material see Lefkowitz 2012.

Perses is a dynamic figure, evolving over the course of the poem as he listens to his brother's advice. He is accused of having many different faults, and this makes him not an inconsistent character but rather the perfect didactic addressee. Hesiod uses his brother's injustice as an excuse to launch into a diatribe on *dikē*, justice; he marks Perses as a fool so that there is a need for him to be taught; he takes his addressee's idleness as a basis for teachings on the benefits of hard work. Already Wilamowitz saw a shift from a Hesiod trying to convince an idle Perses to work (293–319), to a Hesiod in the Calendar offering practical advice when Perses has finally accepted the need for work (from 383 on).<sup>11</sup> Clay goes further, tracing the 'education of Perses' in detail: he must be corrected morally (213) before he can be advised practically (299, 397) and finally be made to appreciate some universal truths (765–828).<sup>12</sup> Most relevant to this chapter, as should become clear, is Marsilio who notes that Perses' appearances are united by his dependence on others, until 405 – when he begins to be a 'would-be farmer whose goal is self-sufficiency'.<sup>13</sup>

Winfried Schmitz argues that the choice of addressee is driven by societal norms. He posits that Near Eastern texts use a father-to-son model because (allegedly) their communities are more hierarchical than archaic Greek society. Richard Martin takes a more literary angle, arguing that the addressee is pointedly chosen by Hesiod as a vehicle for expressing duality and equality. I am inclined to agree with Martin that the addressee is not inevitable, or the natural result of an allegedly egalitarian Greek society, but rather achieves a specific effect.<sup>14</sup> One indication we have of this is the shift in the *Works and Days* away from the succession of generations, and towards sibling rivalry: a shift that is both sustained and pointed. In the Myth of the Races, for example, Hesiod makes clear that the divine succession Uranus/Cronus/Zeus is in the past; the Golden Race flourished in the time of Cronus (III: οἱ μὲν ἐπὶ Κρόνου ἦσαν, ὅτ' οὐρανῷ ἐμβασίλευεν, 'They lived in the time of Cronus, when he was ruling in heaven'), and we can assume that Zeus came to power some time during the Silver Age (I37–8: τοὺς μὲν ἔπειτα | Ζεὺς Κρονίδης ἔκρυψε χολούμενος, 'These Zeus son of Cronus then hid, being angry'). In terms of the 'epic cosmos' (on

<sup>11</sup> Wilamowitz 1928.

<sup>12</sup> Clay 1993 and 2003: 34. Clay 1993: 24 n. 3 notes that 'the more equal fraternal relationship between speaker and addressee (we do not even know whether Hesiod was older than Perses) may be significant'. It is this significance, which Clay raises but does not address, that I hope to explore in this chapter.

<sup>13</sup> Marsilio 1992: 8.

<sup>14</sup> Schmitz 2004, Martin 2004.

which see the Introduction to this volume), Hesiod situates his poem after the generational upheaval of the *Theogony* and within a settled family structure. In terms of that family structure, in turn, the onus is on dynamics within the current generation, as Hesiod's and Perses' own father is a distant memory, and not exactly a positive one: in fact, he is used as an example of what not to do (633–40).<sup>15</sup> Hesiod tells first of his father's chequered career, then of his own voyage and poetic contest. The two men offer contrasting examples, since the first is a tale of misfortune, the second of success. The primary function of these autobiographical details, therefore, is to set positive and negative models. The father functions as a negative paradigm for Perses, in contrast to the wise man who concentrates on agriculture. Hesiod himself is a good model, of course, successful in poetry and knowledgeable in farming. He has made his own way in life, breaking away from his father's example – and that is a strong declaration of self-sufficiency.<sup>16</sup> At 654–7 Hesiod tells of his travels to Chalcis, for the funeral games of Amphidamas. The games are organised by Amphidamas' sons, on which Marsilio comments: 'Unlike the brothers Hesiod and Perses, who are opponents in a dispute over the distribution of their dead father's estate, the sons of Amphidamas harmoniously joined together to offer prizes at their father's funeral.'<sup>17</sup> This throws into relief Hesiod's and Perses' relationship with their father, and with each other. In Hesiod's didactic setting, there is no neat handing down of wisdom from one generation to the next. His father is flawed. The fact that Amphidamas appears not to be is a point against the cultural reading of didactic models offered by Schmitz. In the story of his travels Hesiod gives us a glimpse of an alternative model of respect for previous generations, the model adhered to by many Near Eastern wisdom texts, against which he presents his own autobiographical creation. Further, Amphidamas is described as δαῖφρων (654), a heroic adjective applied to warriors throughout the Homeric poems. He is thus equated with the Achaeans who sailed to Troy, negatively valorised in the preceding lines (651–3), and a representative of the heroic tradition from which Hesiod distances his own didactic *Works and Days*.<sup>18</sup> In the figure of Amphidamas, therefore, Hesiod provides a counterpoint both to his own didactic model, and to his didactic project more generally.

<sup>15</sup> We are a long way from Near Eastern wisdom such as the Egyptian *Instructions of Ptahhotep* 565: 'If a son accepts what his father says, no project of his miscarries.'

<sup>16</sup> For a summary of contrasts between Hesiod and his father see Thalmann 1984: 23–4.

<sup>17</sup> Marsilio 2000: 44.

<sup>18</sup> On the relationship between the *Works and Days* and heroic epic, see Canevaro 2014.

<sup>19</sup> Martin 2004: 18 gives an interpretation of lines 706–13 which takes this to be ‘an effective marker of the hard-won assent of the addressee to become a listener who can now deal with the “true things” on a level of abstraction, removed from the distorted world of the *neikos* in which he had been trapped previously’. Hesiod is giving advice about the fraternal relationship, to his brother, and trusting that he will be able to use it. This suggests an element of progress: Clay’s ‘education of Perses’ seems to be taking hold, as Martin too notes.



epic convention only to break away from it. He begins with the Muses (1: Μοῦσαι Πιερίηθεν, 'Muses from Pieria'), conforming to their demand in the *Theogony* that he always sing of them first and last (34: σφᾶς δ' αὐτὰς πρῶτόν τε καὶ ὕστατον αἶν' αἰείδειν). Here he asks the Muses to sing of Zeus (2: Δι' ἐννέπετε), whose powers he extols; but then, in a reversal of audience expectation, he departs from the Muses' song to sing of something else (10: ἐγὼ δέ κε Πέρσῃ ἐτήτυμα μυθησαίμην, 'but I shall tell true things to Perses'). Although he is the focus of the proem, Zeus is soon eclipsed by the importance of work and justice as the main themes of the poem. Hesiod occasionally suggests that everything depends on Zeus, and that the god's plans are beyond human control and even understanding – and yet at the same time insists that some things can be known, and certain forms of behaviour are preferable to others.<sup>20</sup> Unlike the *Theogony* and in Homeric epic, where the poet and the Muses sing in unison, the *Works and Days* seems polyphonic: the Muses are invited to sing a song tangential to Hesiod's own.<sup>21</sup> Hesiod himself plans to sing of ἐτήτυμα, addressed in the first instance to Perses; and his focus is on mortal men (3: βροτοὶ ἄνδρες).

Similarly, the conflict between Hesiod and his brother both evokes heroic epic and yet breaks away from it. Quarrels pervade much of epic poetry, for example the row between Achilles and Agamemnon, the dispute depicted on the Shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.497–508), or the fight between Achilles and Odysseus celebrated by Demodocus in *Odyssey* 8 – but the dispute between Hesiod and Perses is of a markedly different type. They are arguing not over spoils of war or physical prowess, but over the distribution of their inheritance. Nor is the inheritance a kingdom or a title, as is the case with mythical sibling pairs such as Atreus and Thyestes, Eteocles and Polynices, or Danaus and Aegyptus. What is at stake here is a κλῆρος, a plot of land. Hesiod and Perses are concerned with land and with βίος, livelihood: Iron Age familial concerns.

The best way of managing both land and life, according to Hesiod, is by being self-sufficient. This is consistently foregrounded through the *Works and Days*. The farmer should be resourceful: weaving (538), sewing (544), and creating all his agricultural tools seemingly single-handedly (423–36). He should focus on his own *oikos* as his first priority (405) and distrust the outside world (365). If help must be called for, it should be

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, 483–4 discussed below at p. 186.

<sup>21</sup> On the Muses' song as tangential to Hesiod's own, see Clay 2003: 72–8, Haubold 2010: 21. On the Homeric model of poet's and Muses' voices blending, see Graziosi/Haubold 2010: 1–8.

from a forty-year-old farmhand who will not be distracted by companions (443).<sup>22</sup> Women are regarded with suspicion in as much as they pose a threat to the productivity of the *oikos* (373–5). The ideal family model is tight-knit: marry a woman who lives nearby (700), and have only one heir (376–7).<sup>23</sup> Through his own bid for independence in the proem, Hesiod puts self-sufficiency into practice also at the level of poetics. And just as he breaks away from tradition when he breaks away from the Muses, so he breaks away from tradition when he addresses a brother rather than a son. The choice of a brother as primary addressee reflects both the conflict inherent in the Iron Age and the ideal of self-sufficiency: a brother should not be dependent on his brother, whereas a son relies on his father as a matter of course – at least initially. Here, the poem is not a traditional handing down of wisdom from generation to generation. It is a response to a crisis.

Walcot cites as a possible parallel for Hesiod's and Perses' situation a Hurrian myth in which a man Appu has two sons, the first named Bad and the second Good.<sup>24</sup> Bad suggests to Good that they follow the gods' example and lead their own separate lives, apart from one another. This means a division of their inheritance, and (of course) Bad takes the opportunity to swindle his brother. In terms of genre, this does not really count as a parallel for Hesiod's didactic model as it is a cautionary tale featuring brothers rather than a wisdom text addressed by one to the other. However, it does have some elements which prove interesting for the present discussion, in that it exemplifies the dynamics of the sibling relationship. Bad decides to live independently of his brother, yet by taking more than his fair share he instigates a quarrel. As Walcot points out, 'The main difference between the two texts is that the story of Appu and his two sons has a mythological setting and not the realistic colouring of the *Works and Days*.'<sup>25</sup> He then goes on to ask: 'If Perses existed only in Hesiod's imagination, why did the poet not prefer a mythological setting for his words of wisdom?'<sup>26</sup> Here I part company with Walcot, in that I question arguments that invoke reality because literature will not do. The

<sup>22</sup> Hesiod's emphasis on self-sufficiency is very much an ideal. In reality, he has δμῶνες and θῆτες to share the physical work (on which see Canevaro 2015: 81–8), and the Muses to call upon when in need of poetic support. Like the farmhand without companions, though, Hesiod advocates a hired hand without dependants (602–3): even within a more feasible framework, he is concerned with limiting the circle.

<sup>23</sup> See Goldhill 2010.

<sup>24</sup> Walcot 1966: 98.

<sup>25</sup> Walcot 1966: 99.

<sup>26</sup> Walcot 1966: 105.

point, rather, is that the *Works and Days* teaches us how to manage life in the Iron Age. What more appropriate setting to choose than the Iron Age itself? What more convincing addressee than a real-life man who is failing?<sup>27</sup> And what more keyed-in teacher than another real-life man – one who seems to be faring rather better than his addressee, but should in fact be his equal?

### The Methods

Hesiod teaches self-sufficiency by encouraging his addressee to think for himself, and thus in a sense work for his lesson. At 293–7 he sets up a hierarchy:

οὗτος μὲν πανάριστος, ὃς αὐτὸς πάντα νοήσει,  
 φρασσάμενος, τὰ κ' ἔπειτα καὶ ἐς τέλος ἦσιν ἀμείνω·  
 295 ἐσθλὸς δ' αὖ καὶ κείνος, ὃς εὖ εἰπόντι πίθηται·  
 ὃς δέ κε μήτ' αὐτὸς νοέῃ μήτ' ἄλλου ἀκούων  
 ἐν θυμῷ βάλληται, ὃ δ' αὖτ' ἀχρήσιος ἀνὴρ.

That man is altogether the best, who thinks of everything himself,  
 considering the things which are then better in the end.  
 295 He too is good, who listens to one who speaks well.  
 But he who does not think for himself nor, listening to another,  
 takes the advice to heart, this man is useless.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 293–7

Hesiod champions the πανάριστος, an emphatic formulation which advocates autonomous thought above all else. So important is this intellectual ideal that he returns to it in the final lines of the poem:

... εὐδαίμων τε καὶ ὀλβιος, ὃς τὰδε πάντα  
 εἰδὼς ἐργάζεται ἀναίτιος ἀθανάτοισιν,

... Happy and blessed is the man who knows all these things  
 and works without giving offence to the immortals.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 826–7

Interspersed through the poem are repeated exhortations to consider: ἀνωγα ... φράζεσθαι ('I urge you to consider ...' at 367, 403, and 687). As Martin notes, 'this is not simply authoritative truth handed

<sup>27</sup> The 'real life' feel of the poem does not, as I argued above, necessitate a biographical reading. Rather, we might think in terms of its 'reality effect' (term from Barthes 1989: 139): whether the text invites us to think of Hesiod, Perses, and their father as real or as transparent fiction, and what impact this has on our understanding of the poem.

down, as in the generational transmission of wisdom; it is wisdom that invites debate, an “open” format that is stylized, in the *Works and Days*, as a continuing *neikos*.<sup>28</sup> So, conflict provides the background to the story, and it pervades Hesiod's didactic method. The addressee is encouraged to consider and even to question Hesiod's teachings: to participate actively in learning. This is best channelled through a sibling: someone who feels at liberty to argue.<sup>29</sup>

Hesiod chooses an intra- rather than an inter-generational didactic model in order to put teacher and pupil on a more level playing field. However, even amongst siblings there can never really be equality. First, there is always an elder and a younger. In the *Theogony*, where the focus is on generational succession, the younger sibling is the one to watch; it is the youngest in each generation of gods who is the strongest and who overthrows his father.<sup>30</sup> In wisdom literature, however, the elder brother is in the dominant position. The Akkadian *Counsels of Wisdom* (54), for example, features the precept ‘amûr aha rabâ’, obey the elder brother. Indeed, the common-sense logic of the elder instructing the younger is a feature shared, in this maxim, with the common didactic model of a father's authority over his son. In the *Works and Days*, it is never made explicit who the elder brother is – and that seems telling in itself. Hesiod maintains the illusion of equality to that extent. But the fact that Hesiod is the one doing the teaching implies a hierarchy. Further, Hesiod is allied with the Good Eris, and in the very introduction of it competes with his own *Theogony*, in which there was only hateful Strife (Ἐρις στρυγερή). Perses, on the other hand, champions Bad Eris; indeed, like the Bad Eris, he too is said to help conflict (Eris at 14 δῆριν ὀφέλλει, Perses at 33 δῆριν ὀφέλλοις). Surely it is no coincidence that the Good Eris is the elder sibling (17: τὴν δ' ἑτέραν προτέραν μὲν ἐγείνατο Νύξ ἐρεβεννή, ‘the other [Good Eris] dark Night bore first’). Similarly, in the *Iliad* brothers may fight alongside one another,<sup>31</sup> but there are implicit hierarchies of strength

<sup>28</sup> Martin 2004: 11. For more on the theme of *neikos* and its relevance to both conflict and consensus, see Hesk's chapter in this volume.

<sup>29</sup> This contrasts markedly with the Akkadian *Pessimistic Dialogue between Master and Servant*, in which the hierarchy is so established that the servant, displaying a vast knowledge of maxims and a skill at taking up both sides of a debate, can do nothing but agree with his master's every whim. On this poem and its didactic stance, very different from that of the *Works and Days*, see Canevaro 2015: 98–9.

<sup>30</sup> Hes. *Th.* 137: ὀπλότατος γένητο Κρόνος ἀγκυλομήτης, ‘Cronus crooked of counsel they bore last’; 478–9: ὀππότ' ἄρ' ὀπλότατον παίδων ἤμελλε τεκέσθαι, | Ζῆνα μέγαν, ‘When she was about to give birth to the last of her children, great Zeus’.

<sup>31</sup> Trypanis 1963.



source of inspiration, the other is blameworthy and should be avoided (12–13). Perses is associated with Bad Eris, he is foolish and useless (νήπιος, ἀχρήσιος ἄνθρωπος), whereas Hesiod assumes the role of the πανάριστος.

The foregrounding of self-sufficiency creates tension with the didactic thrust of the poem, as teaching inevitably involves a relationship of exchange and, at least up to a point, reliance and trust.<sup>33</sup> This tension between depending on a teacher and thinking for oneself is to a certain extent built into the genre of wisdom literature, in that all teachers must want their pupils to grow up and take charge of their own affairs. The epilogue to the Egyptian *Instructions of Ptahhotep*, for example, includes a lecture on the need to listen to teachings and the rewards that the listener will reap, and a warning to the 'fool' who refuses to listen.<sup>34</sup> Still, Hesiod's unique position is expressed through his role as an admonishing brother: he reinterprets the relationship between teaching and learning in light of his own thematic concern with self-sufficiency in the Iron Age. To negotiate the tension between self-sufficiency and didacticism, Hesiod must encourage equality whilst simultaneously retaining some authority: he addresses a brother who should be his equal but – because of bad choices, poor planning and hence insufficient resources – is not.

We can see this negotiation between addressing an equal, and yet instructing him, in the introduction to the Myth of the Races:

εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις, ἕτερόν τοι ἐγὼ λόγον ἐκκορυφώσω,  
εὖ καὶ ἐπισταμένως, σὺ δ' ἐνὶ φρεσὶ βάλλεο σῆσιν ...

If you wish, I will summarise another story for you,  
well and skilfully, and you take it to heart ...

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 106–7

Hesiod encourages his addressee to take control of his own learning (εἰ δ' ἐθέλεις), but at the same time explicitly establishes his poetic and didactic authority (εὖ καὶ ἐπισταμένως).<sup>35</sup> Similarly, in Hesiod's repeated advocating of the intellectual ideal, self-sufficiency interplays with didacticism: he *instructs* (ἀνωγα) us to *consider* (φράζεσθαι).

Perhaps it is his special knowledge of the divine which allows Hesiod to assume the role of instructor. Such knowledge certainly sets Hesiod above his brother, giving him added didactic authority. Although at 483–4 Hesiod concedes that:

<sup>33</sup> On this negotiation of self-sufficiency and didacticism see Canevaro 2015.

<sup>34</sup> See Lichtheim 1996: 245.

<sup>35</sup> See Thomas's chapter in this volume, p. 71 for this phrase in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, used of the scheming Hermes' lies and prevarication.

ἄλλοτε δ' ἄλλοιός Ζηνὸς νόος αἰγίοχοιο,  
ἀργαλέος δ' ἀνδρεσσι καταθνητοῖσι νοῆσαι.

The mind of aegis-bearing Zeus is different at different times,  
and it is difficult for mortal men to know it.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 483–4

in the next lines he goes on to give some very precise information, pinpointing the alternative ploughing season with a series of specific temporal markers. It may be difficult to predict everything, but Hesiod comes pretty close. He goes even further at 661–2:

ἀλλὰ καὶ ὥς ἐρέω Ζηνὸς νόον αἰγίοχοιο·  
Μοῦσαι γάρ μ' ἐδίδασξαν ἀθέσφατον ὕμνον αἰεῖδειν.

But I shall tell the mind of aegis-bearing Zeus,  
for the Muses taught me to sing a boundless song.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 661–2

The Muses may for the most part sing a song tangential to Hesiod's own, but they are there to lend support when Hesiod, ignorant of seafaring, is in need of information. Though Hesiod is more often the πανάριστος, in this passage he shows that he can also be the ἐσθλός and call on the Muses for help. He offers two models for his brother to emulate, one (we suppose) more readily attainable than the other.<sup>36</sup> And just as Hesiod provides an easier model to emulate, so he presents it within a framework that itself engenders emulation: as Martin notes, 'it is easier to be like a brother than like a father. One already is, genetically.'<sup>37</sup>

One of the most striking examples of Hesiod's poetic knowledge, a knowledge through which he maintains didactic authority despite his focus on self-sufficiency, is his hyper-realistic description of woodcutting at 414–47. He lists types of wood, kinds of tools, parts of the plough, all with precise measurements. Such a detailed section seems to be designed to impress. Whether or not one could go away from a performance of the *Works and Days* able to make a wagon or a plough, one would have the lingering impression of a knowledgeable poet able to recall not just

<sup>36</sup> Of the 'options' presented at lines 293–7 Martin 2004: 19 comments: 'Of the three characters – the man who thinks independently vs. one who obeys a good speaker vs. one who does neither – Perses can now be assumed to have chosen the middle role, encouraged by the ideal of the first and dissuaded by the last.' The πανάριστος is the bar set slightly higher than is feasible (Hesiod's added didactic authority – perhaps that of the elder brother), the ἀχρήμιος ἀνὴρ the threat that drives Perses to be better.

<sup>37</sup> Martin 2004: 18.

myths and precepts but also minute technical details, with astounding precision of language. It is this impression which makes the passage so effective in didactic terms. When the subject matter is not naturally enticing (the plough is no Promethean myth), the way in which it is described must be all the more powerful, and Hesiod amazes his audience with detail. He makes his addressee mindful (422: μεμνημένος) by displaying his own memory, and encourages him to learn by showing him how much he knows (427: πόλλ' ἐπικαμπύλα κᾶλα). Furthermore, immediately after the lengthy description of the woodcutting Hesiod declares:

νήπιος, οὐδὲ τὸ οἶδ' ἑκατὸν δέ τε δούρατ' ἀμάξης.  
τῶν πρόσθεν μελέτην ἔχέμεν οἰκίῃα θέσθαι.

Fool, he does not know: one hundred are the timbers of a wagon.  
Take care to have them in the house in advance.

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 456–7

Only the fool thinks he can put together a wagon, just like that. Hesiod, for his part, *knows* that 'many are the curved planks' (427: πόλλ' ἐπικαμπύλα κᾶλα) and 'a hundred are the timbers of a wagon' (456: ἑκατὸν δέ τε δούρατ' ἀμάξης): he has just listed them all, at length and with great precision. Hesiod's stance here may be compared to an interjection, on the part of the Homeric narrator, at *Iliad* 2.38:

νήπιος, οὐδὲ τὰ ἦδη ᾧ ῥα Ζεὺς μῆδετο ἔργα.

Fool, he did not know of the things Zeus was planning.

*Iliad* 2.38

Agamemnon, the target in the Iliadic passage, may not know Zeus's mind, but the Muse-inspired poet certainly does, and he will soon tell us of these very things, or rather 'works', ἔργα, which Agamemnon ignores. In the *Works and Days*, the formulation 'fool, he does not know' implies superiority.<sup>38</sup> Hesiod sets himself above the fool and, by implication, above his addressee. The difference, in relation to Homer, is that he does not judge attitudes and events that happened in the distant past, with hindsight and with the help of the Muses. Rather, he gives advice about how to behave now, in the present – even while acknowledging that the mind of Zeus is hard for a mortal to read.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the other use of the phrase at 40–1.



## The Family

The brother-to-brother didactic model suggests equality, encouraging the addressee, and also the audience more generally, to participate, think, and take charge. Hesiod's divergence from tradition is linked to his ideal of self-sufficiency. Perses should be independent of his brother. However, such equality is counterbalanced by hierarchies of knowledge and behaviour (hierarchies which are provisional and unstable). Hesiod emphasises this by alluding to, and displaying, his superior knowledge. Too much conflict between siblings is discouraged. The differentiation between two Erides teaches us that whilst healthy competition is beneficial, outright dispute spells disaster. The story of Pandora reveals that Epimetheus should have listened to his brother. In the Age of Heroes, sibling rivalry contributed to the race's downfall: some of the heroes fell in seven-gated Thebes (162: ἑπταπύλῳ Θήβῃ), fighting over 'the flocks of Oedipus' – a rather down-to-earth reference to the story, presumably familiar to the audience, of the brothers Eteocles and Polynices fighting over their inheritance. As part of Hesiod's apocalyptic vision for the decline of the Iron Age, 'a brother will not be dear, as before' (184: οὐδὲ κασίγνητος φίλος ἔσσεται, ὥς τὸ πάρος περ).

Fraternal relationships are, therefore, a test case.<sup>39</sup> Given how difficult they prove to be, it seems worth asking whether – according to Hesiod – it would be better not to have a brother at all. In lines 376–7, he claims that it is indeed best to have only one son, so that the inheritance is not split and the estate's fortune grows. However, just a few lines later, he presents an alternative scenario:

380      ῥεῖα δέ κεν πλεόνεσσι πόροι Ζεὺς ἄσπετον ὄλβον  
          πλείων μὲν πλεόνων μελέτη, μείζων δ' ἐπιθήκη.

380      Zeus could easily bestow immense wealth upon more people:  
          more hands, more work, and the surplus is bigger.<sup>40</sup>

Hesiod, *Works and Days* 379–80

<sup>39</sup> A test case for specifically familial and interpersonal relationships more generally – but also for poetics. As Martin 2004: 20–1 suggests, 'there is the possibility that the "myth" of Hesiod and his brother Perses, the structural and rhetorical principle for the first part of the *Works and Days*, may itself be a reflection of the traditions of rhapsodic competition that we find stylized in such representations as that in the *Certamen Homeri et Hesiodi*. It is noteworthy that the *Certamen* story is explicitly opposed to other configurations of literary history in which Homer was said to be younger or older than Hesiod.' Just as Hesiod and Perses in the *Works and Days* are kept on precariously equivalent footing, so too are Hesiod and Homer in the *Certamen* presented as more or less equals. On the *Certamen* see Bassino's chapter in this volume.

<sup>40</sup> I use Most's 2006 translation here.

Judgements about the ideal size of a household are difficult to make, partly because the results depend on factors beyond human control – that is to say, on Zeus. But one thing is clear: the question is addressed in terms of securing a livelihood. That is the ultimate concern. In Homeric epic, being a single child is presented as a bad thing (e.g. *Il.* 9.482, 10.317, 14.492, *Od.* 16.19). As Goldhill points out,<sup>41</sup> this is particularly evident at *Od.* 16.117–21:

120 ὦδε γὰρ ἡμετέρην γενεὴν μούνωσε Κρονίων·  
 μοῦνον Λαέρτην Ἀρκείσιος υἱὸν ἔτικτε,  
 μοῦνον δ' αὖτ' Ὀδυσῆα πατὴρ τέκεν· αὐτὰρ Ὀδυσσεύς  
 120 μοῦνον ἔμ' ἐν μεγάροισι τεκὼν λίπεν οὐδ' ἀπόνητο.  
 τῷ νῦν δυσμενέες μάλα μυρίοι εἶσ' ἐνὶ οἴκῳ.

For the son of Cronus made our race single thus:  
 Arkeisius had an only son, Laertes,  
 and he in turn was father to an only son, Odysseus. And Odysseus  
 120 had me as an only son in his halls, and left, and had no joy of me.  
 For this reason countless enemies are now in my house.

*Odyssey* 16.117–21

At *Works and Days* 379–80 Hesiod concedes that there is safety in numbers, but reworks it in light of Iron Age concerns: the point here is not warfare but productivity. In *Odyssey* 24, when Laertes, Odysseus, and Telemachus are faced with the suitors' kin, it is the survival of the male line that all three have in mind, not the economic viability of the household.<sup>42</sup> In the *Works and Days*, priorities are different. To Hesiod, the only child is preferable, because he preserves the wealth of the *oikos*. The larger family is only an advantage when it increases wealth and productivity. This thought can be linked to Hesiod's choice of primary addressee. Without a brother, the narrator would have had an easier life, practising his ideal of contained, self-sufficient work. Perses provides Hesiod with an opportunity to articulate that ideal. A brother is not like a friend: he cannot simply be jettisoned. He is also not like a son, in that he is never expected to be entirely dependant, nor indeed to take over from a certain point onwards. The wayward brother threatens the possibility of self-sufficiency, and simultaneously helps to articulate its desirability. Hesiod must care about Perses, and not simply fight against him. Fraternal conflict thus provides the perfect backdrop for a lesson about the need to rely on oneself.

<sup>41</sup> Goldhill 2010. See also Donlan 2007.

<sup>42</sup> A point I owe to Donlan 2007: 37.